



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Department of Natural Resources Testimony AB62

Presented to:

Assembly Tourism, Recreation and State Properties Committee
10 am, Thursday, March 29, 2007 Room 300-NE.

Presented by:

Laurie Osterndorf, Administrator, Division of Land

2007 Assembly Bill 62 – Electric receptacles maintained by the Department of Natural Resources at state park campsites.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. We are here to speak in support of AB-62.

Wisconsin State Parks provide quality outdoor recreational and educational opportunities in a natural/rustic setting. The passage of this bill will continue that important mandate while allowing State Parks to provide electrical service in selected campsites in appropriate parks to help meet the current and future needs of our citizens. The results of adding a relatively small number of electrical sites to specific loops separated from non-electrical sites will ensure that a significant number of rustic sites will not be impacted by the addition of electrical service. Yet, this action will allow a greater diversity of citizens to enjoy state parks and experience nature.

The DNR Natural Resources Board has approved this proposed action and the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks representing over 3,000 citizens has passed a resolution in support of this bill.

Supporting Information:

1. Wisconsin has one of the most rustic state park systems in the nation. Adding a reasonable amount of electrical campsites will not change that. There is a significant portion of our camping public who desire electricity at their sites whether they are camping in RV's or tents. The 2005-2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) found that not having enough campsites, particularly electrical sites, ranked 4th highest in what campers perceived as barriers for increased physical activity and outdoor recreation. According to the Department of Tourism, 68% of all campers in Wisconsin camp in RVs, pop-ups, trailers, trucks, and vans. If only 25% of our campsites provide electrical hook-ups, we are not meeting the demand of 43% of Wisconsin campers (68% need electric, 25% of our sites have it.) If we cannot provide electrical service for the customers who prefer state parks, we will lose them to nearby states that provide that service.

Also, it is a misconception that our parks will fill up with huge Class A motor homes with the passage of this bill. Actually, only 7.9% of all campers in Wisconsin have Class A motor homes.

2. We have wonderful state parks but they are underutilized during weekdays as well as in the spring and fall camping seasons. Weekdays, our system has 90% of the existing electrical sites occupied and only 37% of non-electrical sites occupied. Senior citizens, who tend to desire electrical sites, have the time to visit our parks during weekdays. That generates revenue from existing capacity. Even state parks like Peninsula, one of the best in the country, cannot attract spring and fall campers when cold nights warrant small electric heaters.
3. This change will not have a significant competitive impact on other campground providers. Of the nearly 70,000 licensed campsites in Wisconsin, the 3,610 total state park sites account for 5.2% of the total. Even with a full build-out to the 30% level authorized in this bill, State Parks would be adding only 468 new electrical sites and will continue to be a small player. More reassuring to the local private campground is the cap of no more than 50% of the sites at any one state park would be electrified. Additionally, with no sewer or water hookups, State Parks will not be a significant competitor to the private campground business. State Parks fill a slightly different niche with our naturalist programs and emphasis on serenity verses the more structured recreation of a private campground. Private campgrounds often provide miniature golf, game rooms, basketball courts, full hookups, water slides, and lodging. Because of that, we draw different clientele with only a small overlap.
4. One of our current campground problems involves the use of generators that are noisy and disruptive. Generators are used by campers in our state parks where we do not provide electrical sites. Even though we limit their use, the use of generators is increasing as the demand for electricity increases and the noise of gasoline-powered generators impacts our "rustic" campers who are looking for a more peaceful experience.
5. We are striving to become more self-sufficient as the citizens' share of tax revenue for state parks shrinks. Adding 468 electrical sites over the next few years would generate \$308,000 per year in revenue. That new revenue could be used to provide for the management of not only our campgrounds but also the natural and cultural resources of the state park system. Adding electrical sites in select state parks could, in fact, subsidize the preservation of the natural amenities that all types of campers seek in Wisconsin State Parks.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today. We welcome any questions you might have.



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

March 29, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties
Representative Dean Kaufert, Chairman

FROM: Kathi Kilgore, Lobbyist
Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners

RE: AB 62 – Expansion of Electricity at State Park Campsites

The Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners (WACO), representing over 200 campgrounds across the state, respectfully requests your support for Assembly Bill 62. The bill:

- Increases the number of electrical receptacles throughout the state park system to 30 percent. This is a 5 percent increase over current law.
- Creates a new statute to cap the number of campsites with electricity at any one state park to 50 percent. This per-park cap is in response to WACO's concerns last session. We believe a per-park cap is needed to prevent some state parks from increasing to 75, 80 or 100 percent electricity.

Last session, WACO opposed the bill as it was originally introduced, but we worked with Representative Gottlieb to address our concerns. The bill was amended in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and WACO supported the amended bill. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and the bill did not receive a vote by the full Assembly.

WACO believes AB 62 is a fair, reasonable compromise which balances the interests of the private campground industry with the public-funded state parks.

However, we go on record at this time to state that WACO opposes the further addition of other modern conveniences to Wisconsin's state parks. It is our hope that the passage of the AB 62 will "stave off" these attempts by the Department of Natural Resources.

The members of WACO respectfully request your support of AB 62. Thank you for your consideration.



MARK GOTTLIEB

Speaker Pro Tempore
Wisconsin State Assembly

**Testimony of Rep. Mark Gottlieb
Assembly Bill 62
Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties
March 29, 2007**

Chairman Kaufert and Members:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 62 (AB 62), relating to electric receptacles maintained by the Department of Natural Resources at state park campsites.

Two years ago a Port Washington constituent contacted me requesting that I introduce legislation increasing the number of electrified campsites in state parks because she was unable to obtain electrical service at a state park she frequents. I introduced 2005 Assembly Bill 150 to raise the cap on the percentage of state park campsites that can be electrified. Concurrently, at a 2005 Natural Resources Board meeting, the Board unanimously approved a proposal calling for the 25% cap on electrified sites for state parks to be increased to 50%. This was the original intent of AB 150, but because of some concerns from private campground owners I offered a substitute amendment which was supported by the Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners. The bill failed to pass but the language in the substitute amendment from last session's bill is the exact same language that is now in AB 62.

Assembly Bill 62 does three things:

- 1) Increases the number of electrified campsites the DNR can have in state parks from 25% of all state park campsites to 30%.
- 2) No more than 50% of the state park campsites in any one state park can have electrified receptacles.
- 3) Maintains current law stipulating that no less than 25% of all state park campsites in the state shall remain rustic.

Of the current 3,610 campsites in the Wisconsin state park's system, 800 (22.16%) are now electrified. By the end of the 2007-09 biennium, as approved by the State Building Commission, there are expected to be 3,952 campsites with 978 (24.7%) electrified. As you can see we are quickly approaching the 25% threshold. I have been notified by DNR that there are a number of parks with electrical campsites in their master plans, but they are delaying those projects due to the 25% cap. According to the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) there are at least 72,000 publicly and privately-owned campsites in Wisconsin. Campsites in state parks account for only 5% of

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the statewide total, and after this year's expansion, state park campsites will account for only 5.5% of the statewide total.

As a state, we have made a policy decision to support, protect and make available to the general public the natural resources and recreational opportunities that our state parks offer. Our state parks should not try to compete with high-service private campgrounds that offer sewer and water hookups, pools, games, restaurants, and other recreational amenities, but we should be willing to provide basic services that will allow more Wisconsin families to enjoy our state park system. Electrical service has clearly become one of those basic services and the public is demanding it. Not only is it in the state's financial interest to support this demand (positive cash flow), the changing demographics of the parks' users is requiring it.

I do believe that campers appreciate the rustic appearance of our state parks, but when electric sites are over 90% occupied in midweek, compared to 30% midweek occupancy for non-electrical sites, the public is telling us something. One of the main complaints from state park campers is the excessive noise that comes from the use of generators to create electricity, so why not provide it to campers through environmentally clean and quiet means? Anyone who visits our parks will also recognize that the state does a wonderful job of concealing and isolating the campsite loops that do have electrical runs. In my opinion it takes nothing away from the natural, rustic aura that the Wisconsin state parks system provides for visitors and campers from all walks of life.

I respectfully ask that the members of this committee support and take executive action on Assembly Bill 62.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Current Campsite Statistics - 12/21/06 - State Parks Only

Property	% Electric Current
Amnicon Falls State Park	0.00%
Big Bay State Park	1.61%
Big Foot Beach State Park	0.00%
Blue Mound State Park	32.50%
Brunet Island State Park	34.78%
Buckhorn State Park	3.23%
Chippewa Moraine Ice Age State Rec. Area	0.00%
Copper Falls State Park	26.23%
Council Grounds State Park	34.55%
Devil's Lake State Park	30.57%
Elroy-Sparta State Trail	0.00%
Glacial Drumlin State Trail	6.25%
Governor Dodge State Park	27.24%
Hartman Creek State Park	3.67%
High Cliff State Park	26.67%
Interstate State Park	0.00%
Kohler-Andrae State Park	45.87%
Lake Kegonsa State Park	2.41%
Lake Wissota State Park	20.48%
Merrick State Park	33.33%
Mill Bluff State Park	24.00%
Mirror Lake State Park	21.25%
Nelson Dewey State Park	43.75%
New Glarus Woods State Park	2.63%
Newport State Park	0.00%
Pattison State Park	29.03%
Peninsula State Park	21.87%
Perrot State Park	36.89%
Potawatomi State Park	20.97%
Rib Mountain State Park	10.00%
Roche-A-Cri State Park	2.44%
Rock Island State Park	0.00%
Rocky Arbor State Park	21.11%
Tower Hill State Park	0.00%
Wildcat Mountain State Park	0.00%
Willow River State Park	33.33%
Wyalusing State Park	29.57%
Yellowstone Lake State Park	32.09%
Subtotals:	22.16%

*468 sites
Total*

Projected End of 07-09 Biennium Campsite Statistics - 12/21/06 - State

Property	Total Sites	Projected June 09 Electric %
Amnicon Falls State Park	36	0.00%
Big Bay State Park	62	25.81%
Big Foot Beach State Park	100	15.00%
Blue Mound State Park	80	32.50%
Brunet Island State Park	69	34.78%
Buckhorn State Park	62	3.23%
Copper Falls State Park	61	42.62%
Council Grounds State Park	55	34.55%
Devil's Lake State Park	422	30.57%
Elroy-Sparta State Trail	26	0.00%
Glacial Drumlin State Trail	16	6.25%
Governor Dodge State Park	301	27.24%
Governor Thompson State Park	50	30.00%
Harrington Beach State Park	75	13.33%
Hartman Creek State Park	109	26.61%
High Cliff State Park	121	27.27%
Interstate State Park	84	0.00%
Kohler-Andrae State Park	140	37.86%
Lake Kegonsa State Park	103	26.21%
Lake Wissota State Park	118	27.12%
Merrick State Park	66	33.33%
Mill Bluff State Park	25	24.00%
Mirror Lake State Park	175	29.14%
Nelson Dewey State Park	48	43.75%
New Glarus Woods State Park	38	2.63%
Newport State Park	18	0.00%
Pattison State Park	74	24.32%
Peninsula State Park	471	21.87%
Perrot State Park	104	36.54%
Potawatomi State Park	124	33.06%
Rib Mountain State Park	30	10.00%
Roche-A-Cri State Park	41	2.44%
Rock Island State Park	42	0.00%
Rocky Arbor State Park	90	21.11%
Tower Hill State Park	15	0.00%
Wildcat Mountain State Park	89	11.24%
Willow River State Park	158	16.46%
Wyalusing State Park	115	29.57%
Yellowstone Lake State Park	137	32.85%
Subtotals:	3950	24.76%

